STAR WARS™

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10

ROGUE GROUP'S SNOWSPEEDER

Rebel defenders of Hoth

Imperial snowtroopers

Luke's crash landing

DeAGOSTINI

LUCAS BOOKS

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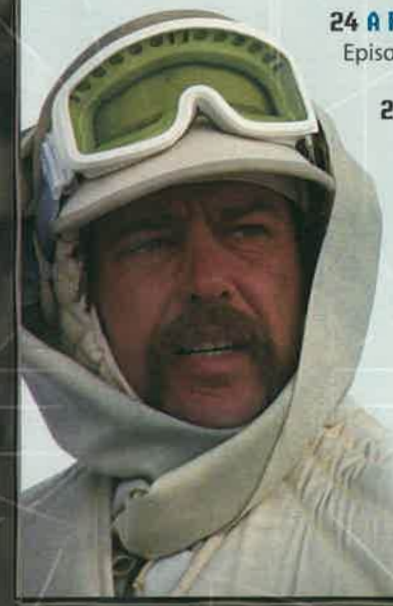

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STAR WARS

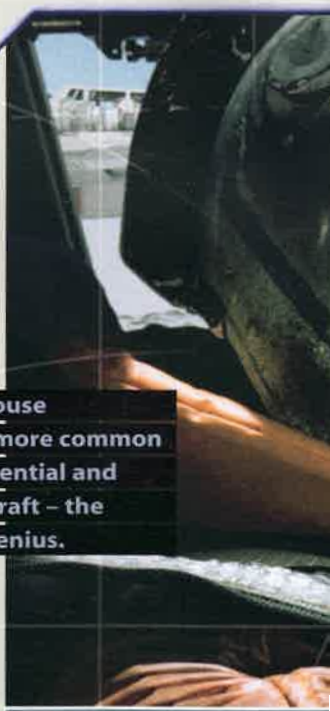
When the Rebel Alliance High Command made the decision to move their main base, always dubbed Echo Base, to the sixth and principal planet of the Hoth system, they knew the frozen world would present a unusual challenge to Alliance personnel. In particular, they had no repulsorlift patrol craft, vital for maintaining security around the base, that could reliably operate in the harsh conditions. The Alliance technicians rose to the challenge and the snowspeeder was born!

"ROGUE GROUP, USE YOUR HARPOONS AND TOW CABLES. GO FOR THE LEGS. IT MIGHT BE OUR ONLY CHANCE OF STOPPING THEM."

LUKE SKYWALKER

SNOWSPEEDER

BRILLIANT IMPROVISATION



Seen in virtually every cargo yard and warehouse complex, the T-47 airspeeder was one of the more common workhorses in the galaxy. Recognising its potential and turning it into a fast, agile patrol and attack craft – the snowspeeder – was a stroke of engineering genius.

Made by Incom, the T-47 had already been used by the Alliance as a light reconnaissance craft on worlds with a friendlier climate than Hoth – Dantooine, for example. In civilian life, it was used to move repulsorlift cargo sleds from place to place. Sitting behind the pilot, a 'cargo-manager' would fire a magnetic grapple cable using a very low-powered 'gun' on the back of the vehicle. The Alliance technicians had already boosted the engine and repulsorlift performance to give the T-47 the speed to get out of any trouble they found. On Hoth, they needed to do a lot more.

Desperation Breeds Invention

The Rebel technicians at Echo Base Hoth included many of the Incom Corporation engineers who had defected when the Empire nationalised their company. Time and again they had performed near-miracles. Modifying their own T-47s, however, had them truly stumped – but only for a while. In the end, the engineers and technicians turned the clunky airspeeders into the sleek, armoured snowspeeders that, ultimately, saved their lives during the evacuation of the base.

Evolve or Die!

In the engineers' favour was the modular nature of the T-47's construction. The repulsorlift and drive engines were easily boosted, giving the craft a top speed of around 1000 km/h, and a combat speed of around 600 km/h.

Meanwhile, the Y-wing fighter supplies were raided for armour plating and for additional pilot and gunner control systems.

For combat duties, the craft was retro-fitted with twin laser cannons slung to either side of the cockpit. The rear-firing harpoon assembly was gutted and upgraded to fire much further and with greater accuracy. Both gunner and pilot could control the weapons systems, thanks to the cannibalised holographic targeting systems.

Fire and Ice

With all of the additional weighty equipment and the extra power requirements of the weapons systems, the power generators were running hot. Under normal conditions, this was not a problem, as radiator fins on the powerplant easily dispersed the heat from the engines. On Hoth, it was discovered that they worked far too well and the generators ran below optimum temperature. The solution was to insulate the radiator fins – essentially, to make them far less efficient than their designers had meant. Coil heaters were added to the repulsorlift engines, and de-icing nozzles were fitted to the braking and turning flaps to prevent the vital systems from freezing solid.

A DEADLY TRIP!

FELLING THE MIGHTY WALKERS

Tauntaun mounts were fine for setting perimeter markers, but could not defend the base against Imperial attack. Rebel Alliance technicians thus worked long, frantic shifts to try to bring the modified T-47 airspeeders, already dubbed snowspeeders by the pilots and crews, into active service.

The tactics for using the snowspeeders in combat had already been worked out by Commander Luke Skywalker, and tacticians Beryl Chiffonage and Risiev Credal. Called the Rogue Doctrine, it had been pieced together from the experiences of all the Rogue Squadron pilots over the years, including operations on Corellia and Balmorra where improvisation had led to the use of tow cables to trip advancing AT-ATs, a technique reserved as a last resort as it left the attacking speeder in a very predictable and vulnerable flight path.

Rush Job

The first few speeders were rushed through to near completion overnight when Han Solo and Luke Skywalker went missing. Most of them barely made it through the frantic search and needed additional maintenance as a result. Nevertheless, this imposed test run taught the technicians what was working, and modifications proceeded well. This turned out to be

The rear-facing gunner controlled the main laser cannon and the harpoon, helped by a holographic targeting display.

more vital than any at Echo Base Hoth could have realised. Not long after Han and Luke were rescued, an Imperial Probot discovered the base. Though it was destroyed, the Imperials were alerted. Echo Base was put on evacuation footing.

Now the pressure really mounted. Pilots and techs worked non-stop to finish the snowspeeders. Even as Rogue Group lifted off in their finished craft, other snowspeeders were still being brought on line for the battle, their welds still cooling as they joined the combat.

Valiant Sacrifice

Though losses were heavy, the snowspeeders and their brave pilots did their jobs magnificently. The stronger armour of the Blizzard Force AT-ATs meant that blasters were not going to work. Even direct hits on supposedly vulnerable areas had no effect. Reluctantly, the order was given to use the tow cables. A number of AT-ATs were brought down this way, but the Empire broke through in the end. The snowspeeders delayed the assault long enough for the majority of personnel to escape Hoth, however.

REBEL INFANTRY ON HOTH

VALIANT PROTECTORS OF ECHO BASE

Though they knew they would be facing the best the Empire could throw at them, the soldiers of the Rebel Alliance who stepped forward to man the trenches and weapons emplacements at the Battle of Hoth did so without hesitation. For them, this was beyond duty – it was simply the right thing to do.

The Alliance had known that any defence of Echo Base Hoth would merely be a holding action designed to allow as many of the base personnel to escape as possible. Victory would be measured in how many ships got away. An Imperial defeat was utterly impossible. As the troops emerged from the base into the harsh, cold sunlight, they knew they were (at least temporarily) safe from orbital bombardment. All that was left was to deal with the Empire's ground troops.

Aerial Support

The Rebel troops, made up of species from all across the galaxy, knew it was very likely they'd face AT-ATs, but hearing their pounding footsteps as they advanced across the ice field chilled the troops more than the biting cold in the air. The sight of Rogue Group's snowspeeders hurtling into combat cheered the soldiers, even as the first ranging shots from the AT-AT guns began to find the entrenched defenders.

Battle Plan

The Rebel infantry were heartened by the arrival of the snowspeeders principally because they could now concentrate on dealing with the smaller AT-STs, AT-PTs, Viper probe droids and any Imperial troops and transports that were advancing on their positions. The Rebels knew that it was unlikely that even the FD P-Tower laser cannon would make a dent in the AT-AT armour. Where the Rebels faced only the smaller Imperial armour and troops, whether inside the base itself or in defence of the ion cannon, they held out longer. On the ice field, however, as soon as the Imperials broke through and the planetary shield fell, the order to retreat was given. By then, however, the majority of the Rebel soldiers were dead or wounded.

Even in defence of their principal base, the Rebel troops were armed with a ragged selection of old but reliable technology. Their most fearsome weapon, the 1.4 FD P-Tower anti-vehicle defence laser cannon, dated from the Clone Wars. For when the combat became up-close and personal, troops were armed with Blastech A280 rifles and

PROFILE

Rebel Infantry

Species:
Various

Weapons:
Blaster rifle and thermal detonators

Affiliation:
Rebel Alliance

a variety of blaster pistols. They were also equipped with as many thermal detonators and other such explosives as could be scrabbled together.

Anti-Infantry Battery

While the A280 rifles had a good range against infantry and the E-web tripod-mounted cannon had a better range, the Rebel Alliance ground troops hoped to weaken any Imperial infantry assault with a barrage from their few DF.9/B anti-infantry towers. In ideal conditions, the DF.9/Bs could be armoured and even proton shielded against blaster fire. Fitted with a decent power generator, the three-man crew of the towers could rain down an near-inexhaustible fire of explosive death. Ideal conditions never seemed to exist for the Rebel Alliance. While the DF.9/Bs did some damage, they were destroyed by the advancing AT-ATs before they could really make their presence felt amongst the ranks of snowtroopers.

Anti-Vehicle Battery

The DF.9/Bs were often run with a skeleton crew, and the same was certainly true of the 1.4 FDP-Tower laser cannons. Ideally, they needed a four-man crew – two at the very least. On Hoth, often only one

Behind the scenes

Redubbing was a major task in the creation of the original *Star Wars* trilogy, as the majority of it was shot at Elstree Studios using British actors. While the Imperials were left with their British accents, many Rebels and others were redubbed by American voice actors if American or Canadian actors hadn't been used. Voices that definitely needed redubbing were those of a group of Norwegian mountain rescue skiers who played the Rebel soldiers defending Echo Base; their participation was secured by a donation to the Norwegian Red Cross!

operator was left to try to coax the twitchy technology, some dating back a generation, into firing on AT-STs and (ever in hope) the supposedly vulnerable joints of AT-ATs. Against smaller armoured vehicles, the disc-shaped towers stood a chance. Against AT-ATs, their fire served only to remind the Imperial gunners to swat the irritating weapons out of existence.

Last Defence

Within Echo Base, the Rebels had attached E-web tripod blasters and some A280s to repulsorsleds, to be quickly moved to delay Imperial incursions. E-webs were mounted at key junctions, and there were even some explosive charges placed to block tunnels.

In the end, the Imperial advance was so swift that most defences were simply swept away. Darth Vader personally led the assault of the 501st Legion, nicknamed "Vader's Fist", into Echo Base. By then, Rebel casualties among the snowspeeder pilots and ground troops were already high.

Escape – at a Price

Their sacrifice did allow over 30 Rebel transports to flee Hoth. That part of the plan succeeded. Unfortunately, the Imperial blockade destroyed or captured 17 of those transports.

"All troops will debark for ground assault. Prepare to target the main generator."

General Veers

DC0052

JEDI ORDER TRANSPORT AIRSPEEDER

Built by Daystar Craft of Coruscant, these airspeeders were just coming into general use around the time of the fall of the Old Republic. Though Daystar were based on the capital world of the Republic, the relatively cheap vehicles were quickly seen on other worlds.

The most famous owners of the DC0052 were the Jedi Order, who maintained a fleet of 16. The vessels allowed the Jedi to avoid the busy, often slow public-transport networks around Coruscant, and saved the Jedi fighters and other larger craft from being used unnecessarily. It says something for the state of the Old Republic at the time (and the pressure the Jedi were under) that the Jedi model of the airspeeder had a drop panel in the cockpit. This allowed the Jedi to leave the craft quickly via a hatch in the floor and get into action while the DC0052 coasted to a safe landing on autopilot.

City Driving

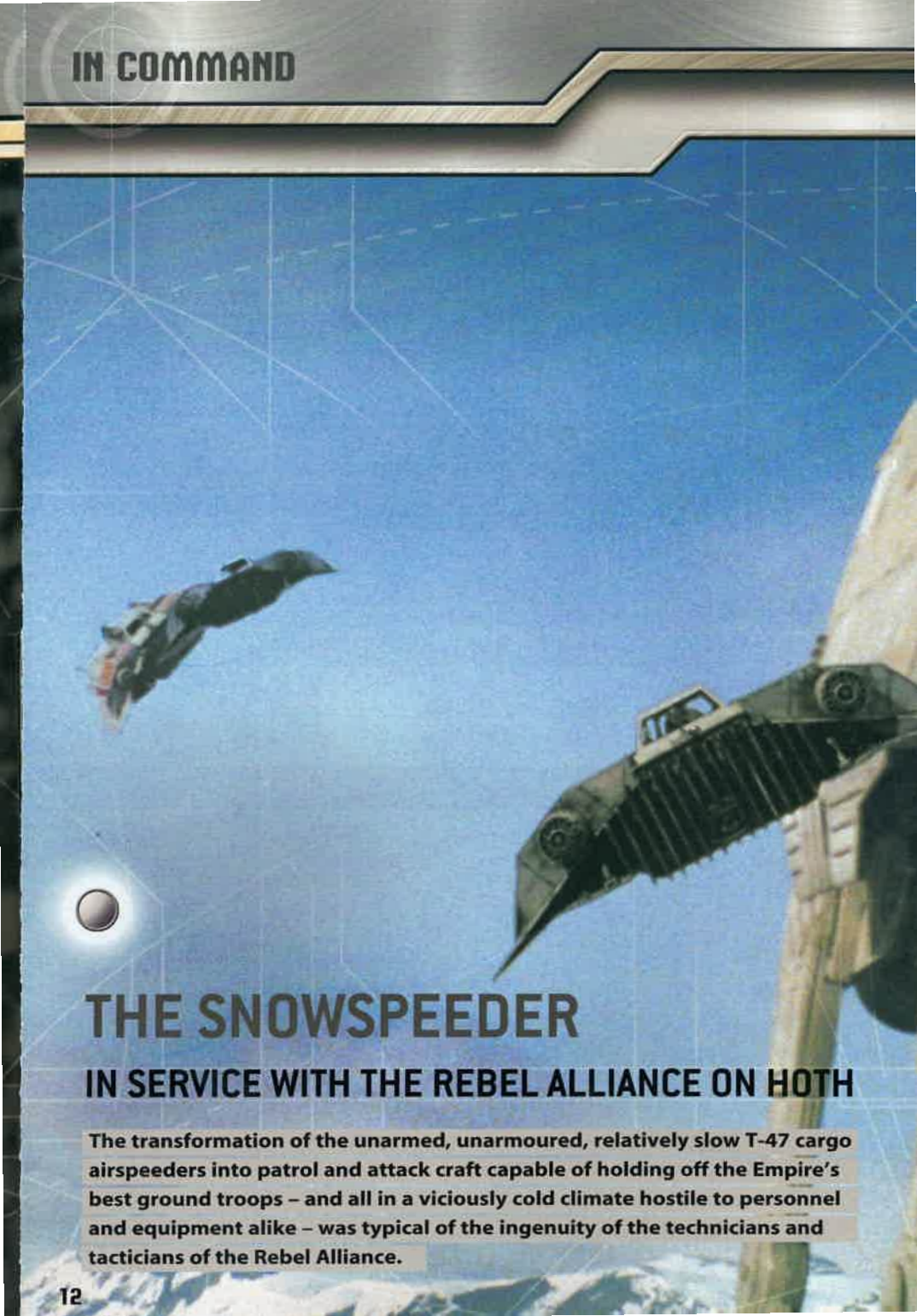
The DC0052 was also informally known by many of its owners as the 'Intergalactic' after the model that preceded it, the reasonably successful DC0040. Resembling a flying wing, the DC0052 could fly at a height of up to 170km on its four Daystar Craft-manufactured repulsorlifts. Thanks to the twin Sono-class thrust pods, the DC0052 had a maximum speed of 800 km/h, and could travel 2,000 km before needing a recharge. This range allowed the Jedi to get around much of Coruscant quickly.

Anakin Skywalker used a DC0052 for his fateful trip from the Jedi Temple to Supreme Chancellor Palpatine's quarters, arriving in time to prevent the execution of the Sith Lord. History might wish that he'd taken public transport...

DC0052

Profile

Type:
Airspeeder
Manufacturer:
Daystar Craft
Length:
2 metres
Affiliation:
Civilian & Jedi Order



THE SNOWSPEEDER

IN SERVICE WITH THE REBEL ALLIANCE ON HOTH

The transformation of the unarmed, unarmoured, relatively slow T-47 cargo airspeeders into patrol and attack craft capable of holding off the Empire's best ground troops – and all in a viciously cold climate hostile to personnel and equipment alike – was typical of the ingenuity of the technicians and tacticians of the Rebel Alliance.

At one point in the defence of Echo Base, Luke gets a direct hit on the cockpit of an AT-AT without doing the huge vehicle any harm. Unable to inflict any damage on the heavily armoured assault behemoths with their lasers, the Rebels had to use other tactics. Making themselves vulnerable to enemy fire, they had to use their harpoon guns to wrap their tow cables around the gangly legs of the Imperial walkers, hoping to tangle their legs and trip them up. Once fallen, AT-ATs have little effect on a battle.

THE SNOWSPEEDER

Type
Modified repulsorlift vehicle

Size
5.3m long

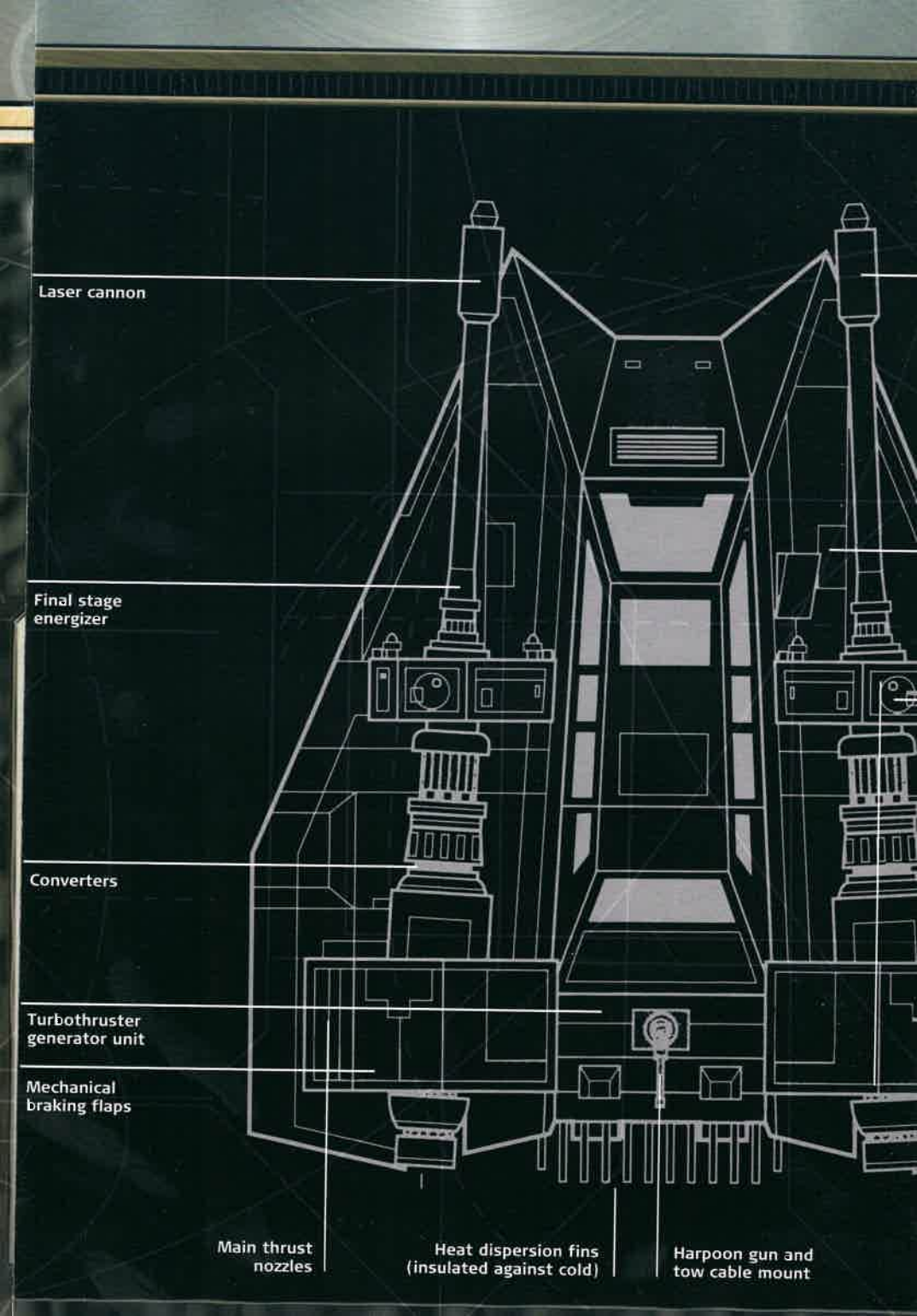
Manufacturer
Incom Corp

Speed
1,000 km/h

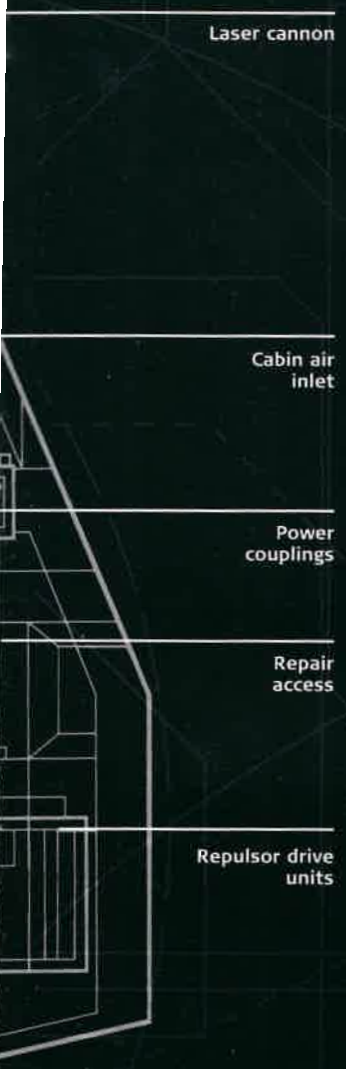
Weapons
Twin laser guns, harpoon and tow cable

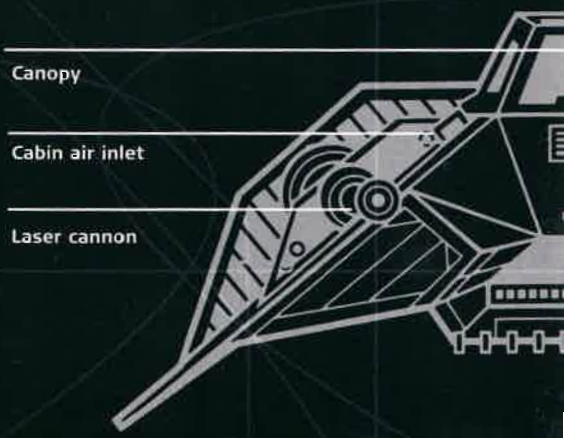
Crew
1 pilot, 1 gunner

Affiliation
Rebel Alliance


Laser cannon
Final stage energizer
Converters
Turbothruster generator unit
Mechanical braking flaps
Main thrust nozzles
Heat dispersion fins (insulated against cold)
Harpoon gun and tow cable mount

The Alliance's two-man T-47 airspeeders were
cargo movers into attack craft. This included
the basic tow cable into a device capable of t





re heavily modified to turn them from
d fitting dual laser cannon, and turning
tripping AT-ATs.

t dispersion fins
ted against cold)

SNOWTROOPERS

BLIZZARD FORCE

Successors to the Clone Cold Assault Troops deployed to the likes of Toola, Blizzard Force were a unit of snowtroopers, some of whom were drawn from Darth Vader's 501st Legion, given special cold weather training. They were called on by Vader's Death Squadron when it was discovered that the Rebel Alliance were on the icy world of Hoth.

Though technically under the command of General Veers, the members of Blizzard Force assigned to enter Echo Base Hoth were led by Darth Vader himself, so keen was he to capture Luke Skywalker.

Perfectly Suited

Snowtrooper armour evolved from that of the clone trooper equivalent, itself a modification of the Phase II armour. Snowtroopers still wore the conventional two-piece temperature controlled black body glove, over which 18 pieces of body armour were fitted, plus the white helmet cowl and overgarment. The heater and personal environment units in the snowtrooper armour were more resilient than those in standard trooper gear. On top of this was worn an airtight fabric oversuit, and a breather hood was built into the helmet and linked with the oversuit. On top of the oversuit, snowtroopers wore a unique chest plate, which included controls for the personal environment equipment and heater. Snowtrooper 'terrain-grip' boots were designed to handle most surfaces. In addition to the standard stormtrooper utility belt, snowtroopers wore backpacks that housed a large power cell, the main heating unit, a homing beacon and a powerful communicator. With this equipment, a snowtrooper was able to operate independently for two full weeks in the harshest of environments. Blizzard Force had the additional benefit of the DLT-20A blaster rifles issued to elite units such as themselves.

Oops

During the filming of Vader's dramatic entrance into Echo Base, one of the snowtroopers immediately behind the Dark Lord stood on his black cloak, bringing actor Dave Prowse up short. The troops behind him, unable to see, collided with him and fell in a heap.

PROFILE

Snowtroopers

Height:
1.83 metres

Vehicle:
AT-AT, HAVw A5 Juggernaut

Weapons:
E-11 blaster rifle, E-web heavy repeating blaster

Affiliation:
Empire

HOTH
ECHO BASE

If the cold wasn't enough to make Hoth inhospitable – the daytime average temperature was -60 degrees – there was also the lethal volcanic activity in the few mountain ranges; the constant tidal shifting of the continent-sized ice plates and the wampa, the planet's top predator, which was one of the most cunning killers in the galaxy.

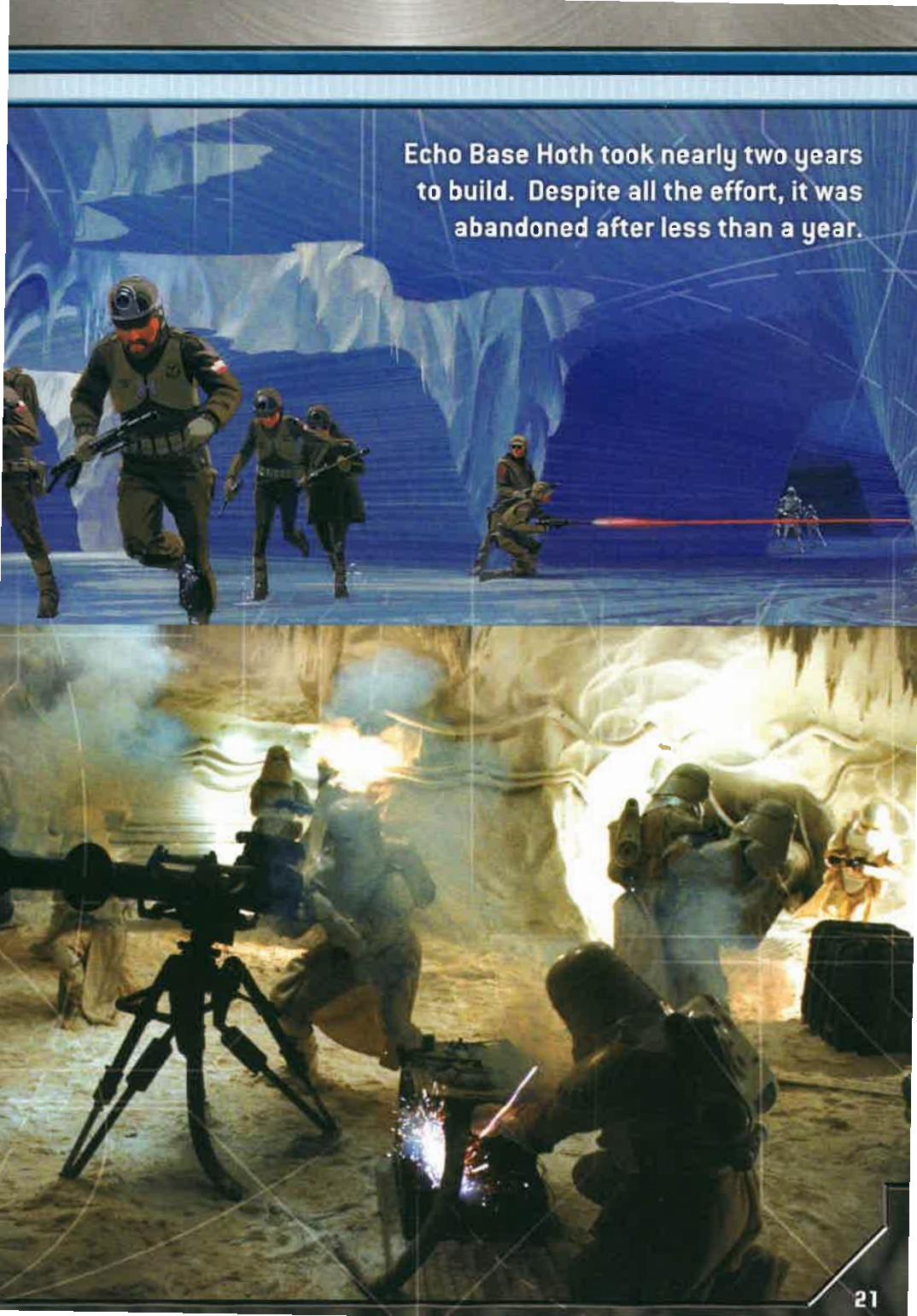
Despite this, or perhaps because no-one could imagine living on Hoth, the planet was inhabited only on a semi-regular basis, generally by smugglers or other fugitives. Han Solo had also used Hoth before his involvement with the Empire. He was less than thrilled at the prospect of returning there. However, while escaping the Imperial blockade of Yavin IV, Luke Skywalker's damaged ship emerged from a transdimensional comet's hyperstream and crashed on Hoth, and had to later be rescued by Han. On his return, Alliance High Command accepted Luke's recommendation that Hoth be actively pursued as the location of Echo Base.

Digging In

So it was that one year after the Battle of Yavin, Major Kem Monnon, commander of the Alliance Corps of Engineers, began to construct Echo Base Hoth. The Alliance took over caverns previously used by smugglers, expanding on what was there, utilising and strengthening existing caverns and tunnels, and digging new ones where necessary. After nearly two years, the base was ready and the Alliance moved in.

Home, for a While

The base, spread over many caverns, was home to nearly 8,000 personnel and some 200 droids. It's hangars held 30 massive transports – all kept on standby in case of evacuation. There was space, too, for the 60 or so fighters needed to escort the transports, and for over two dozen modified T-47 airspeeders, dubbed snowspeeders by their pilots and


Echo Base Hoth took nearly two years to build. Despite all the effort, it was abandoned after less than a year.

During the Imperial assault at the Battle of Hoth, most of the base was destroyed. Parts of it were later used by smugglers and even wampa hunters.

Behind The Scenes

The real-world elements of Echo Base were filmed on the *Star Wars* stage at Elstree Studios, built after the success of the first film in 1977. It measured 76m in length, 37m in width and 14m in height, for a total cubic volume of 35,000m.

technicians. In amongst all of them was the *Millennium Falcon* and, on occasion, the *Outrider* and various other visiting independents the Alliance relied on.

The Nerve Centre

The command centre of Echo Base was a surprisingly small room considering it's importance. Crammed into it were the technicians, droids and equipment that monitored security in and around the base, as well as out into the system beyond. Their ground scanners were augmented by perimeter sensors placed by tauntaun-mounted personnel including Han and Luke. General Carlist Rieekan was commander of the base. He was responsible for giving the order to begin the evacuation of Hoth ahead of the arrival of the Empire, and to raise the defence shield that protected a sizeable area around Echo Base.

Protecting the Perimeter

As well as the passive sensor markers dropped by tauntaun patrols, Echo Base had a number of remote scout sentry posts set beyond the outer edge of the defence shield. These varied from small shelters designed to protect one or two Rebel troopers to larger bunkers with defences. Troops there were charged with monitoring their immediate surroundings.

Officially, they were expected to report Imperial activity before withdrawing and returning to the main base. Unofficially, the scouts knew their jobs were exceptionally dangerous, with a low survival rate. Echo Station 3-T-8 relayed to Echo Base the message from an advanced scout that AT-ATs had been sighted. Shortly after this, the outpost was destroyed by demolition charges.

EPISODE IV
THE SPECIAL EDITION

"One of my objectives was to preserve the film to make it a spectacle worthy of the 21st Century, explained George Lucas for the release of the Special Edition. So began a technical exercise, but also a creative one.

Preserving the film was critical, as Lucas explained. "The most obvious thing that's happened is that we've gone back to the original negative, cleaned it up considerably, redone a lot of the optical effects, the wipes, the dissolves, and improved the quality of the film. Because it was deteriorating. ...It had deteriorated a lot more than people had expected in 20 years." Technology had come so far that Lucas was able to present a version of the original film that was better even than when it was first released.

Finishing the Film

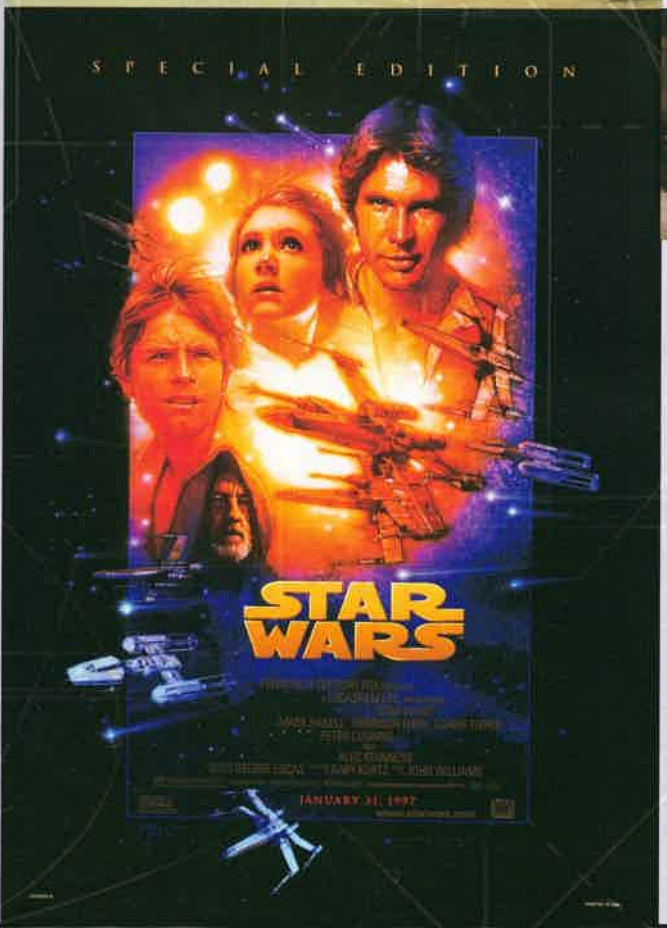
Lucas was not content to just clean up *Star Wars* for it's 20th anniversary re-release. "I've taken a lot of the special effects shots that weren't really as good as I'd hoped they would be because they were sort of prototype technology and I've been able to improve them and add that little difference."

More Scum and Villainy

One particular location in Episode IV that Lucas returned to was Mos Eisley. "Mos Eisley was one of the scenes that actually prompted this whole adventure of redoing the movie", Lucas explains. "I wanted Mos Eisley to be more exotic, and to be larger, and to have spaceships,

Rontos

These four-legged saurians, only seen in the Special Edition version of Episode IV, were native to Tatooine's deserts. Rontos were used as enormous beasts of burden. Many of the planet's inhabitants used them as mounts or to pull goods or passengers through the streets of towns and cities. Towering to some 4.25m high, rontos were nonetheless surprisingly easily spooked.



and more creatures running around." As a result, new sequences were added as Luke pilots his landspeeder through the city that opens out more, giving a real sense of a bigger thriving metropolis.

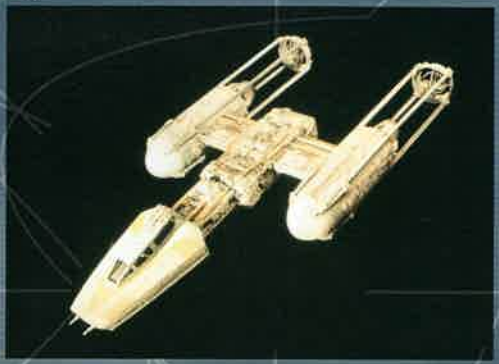
Needs More Slug

"We've added the Jabba the Hutt scene with Han Solo, which was a scene that had been cut out due to time and money constraints." George Lucas explained why. "Once I finished the third film, I really wanted to go back and put that back in there because it was relevant to what happens to Han Solo at the end of the movie. I really wanted to be able to connect the first film with the third film in the way it was meant to be."

THE SNOWSPEEDER

STAGES OF CREATION

EVOLUTION OF THE SNOWSPEEDER



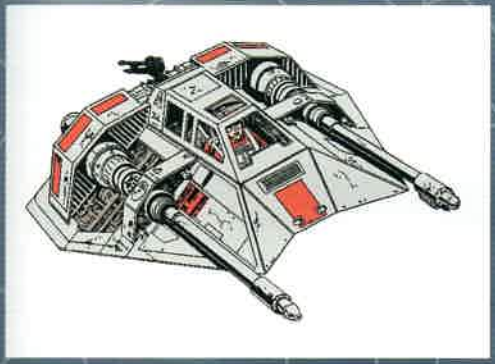
1 Concept artist Joe Johnston imagined a vessel with the fuselage of an X-wing fighter (like the one from Episode IV, above) and the cockpit of a Y-wing.

2 Minus it's wings, the X-wing's long, thin body would have skis mounted below. The Y-wing cockpit would then be added to the body. Above, a Y-wing.

5 All of the models had moveable parts, to bring them to life during filming. The largest had a pilot and gunner who moved thanks to a built-in motor.

6 Several life-sized snowspeeders were built for filming, including for scenes in the cockpit, and the moment when an AT-AT squashes Luke's craft.

The snowspeeder models were built in three different sizes by Steve Gawley, Charlie Bailey and Mike Fulmer of ILM. The smallest, at 50cm, were for the computer controlled dollies while the largest, at 75cm, were used in the pyrotechnic scenes and were flown on wires.



3 In the end, the idea for a craft created from a mix of X- and Y-wing fighter components was abandoned, and the T-47 was begun from scratch.

4 This is the smallest of the snowspeeder models, at around half a metre long. It was used on a mount moved by computer during filming.

7 The highly detailed cockpit on the larger model. The rear gunner was tasked with operating the forward-firing lasers as well as the rear harpoon.

8 One of Ralph McQuarrie's production paintings of Echo Base Hoth. Among the various craft shown is something that looks a bit like a snowspeeder.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 What is the code name for the Rebel Base?

2 What is Dantooine?

3 Who is General Rieekan?

ANSWERS:

1 Echo Base was the code name for the main base for the Rebel Alliance, differentiated by their location – hence Echo Base Hoth.

2 Dantooine was a remote planet that was home to one of the earliest bases for the Rebel Alliance. In an effort to prevent the destruction of Alderaan, Princess Leia gave Grand Moff Tarkin the name Dantooine. Her attempt failed.

3 General Rieekan was an Alderaanian, placed in charge of Echo Base Hoth after successfully defending evacuations at two smaller Rebel bases.

C

Cordé

Character
Episode II

Cordé was the handmaiden and security decoy double for Senator Padmé Amidala, replacing Sabé who had the role while Amidala was Queen of Naboo. Cordé was killed on Coruscant when Zam Wesell blew up the Senator's transport.

Corellia

Planet
Expanded Universe

Home world of Han Solo, Wedge Antilles and, if you ask a Corellian, all the best ships and pilots in the galaxy. Though the space around Corellia is filled with the space docks and construction yards that have made the system so famous, the temperate planet below remains quite rural and surprisingly underdeveloped.

Corporate Alliance

Organisation
Episodes II & III

One of the founding groups behind the Separatist Movement in the Old Republic, its mandate was to act as a neutral go-between for corporate groups. As such, it wielded considerable influence and grew very wealthy.

Crab droid

Droid
Episode III

Built to various sizes by the Techno Union, the smaller LM-432 droids were used for espionage, while the larger, armoured versions were used as assault troops.

CZ-3

Droid
Episode IV

Designed to assist small- to medium-sized businesses, CZ-3 became part of a plot by Jabba the Hutt to uncover the activities of a rival. While the plan was ultimately successful, CZ-3 was destroyed during it.

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